Gouvernement du Québec
Ministère de l'Éducation
Direction des statistiques et des études quantitatives
http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca
No. 11 – May 1999

Education Statistics Bulletin

Education Level of the Adult Populations of Québec's Principal Cultural Communities in 1996

ISSN: 1480-384X
Code: 28-2708A

Introduction

This document contains an analysis of 1996 Canadian census data on the education levels of the adult populations of the principal cultural communities of Québec and the French and English communities. It is based on unpublished data pertaining to the population aged 15 years and up, distributed in accordance with mother tongue, gender, age, and the highest level of education attained. In accordance with customary usage, mother tongue (the first language learned and still understood) was used as the principal criterion for defining the cultural communities. This criterion does, of course, have its limits. For example, it does not enable persons who state that their mother tongue is French or English to be associated with their original cultural community. The two communities that are the most affected by this fact are the Jewish and Haitian communities. Hence, other variables are used to better target such communities. In the case of the Haitian community, the place of birth was substituted for the mother tongue, and the Jewish community was identified by means of a declaration of ethnic origin.

The analysis below thus pertains to the nine principal groups whose mother tongues are neither French nor English, to persons born in Haiti and to persons of Jewish ethnic origin. The education level of these various communities is compared to that of the two principal language groups in Québec, namely, Francophones and Anglophones.

The Aboriginal language groups (Amerindian and Inuktitut) are excluded from this study. In this regard, the Aboriginal language groups were studied separately by the Ministère de l'Éducation[1]. In addition, the data exclude persons who stated that they had more than one mother tongue and include non-permanent residents.

With the exception of the Haitian community, the analysis deals not only with immigrants, but also with the entire adult population of the various communities. However, the populations studied received part of their education abroad. The situation described in this document hence partially reflects the effect of immigrant selection criteria.

It is also important to note that the data contained in this bulletin are of a different nature than those on access to the various levels of education, which are published in the Education Indicators. These access rates measure the probability of reaching each level of education in the current conditions experienced by students at all levels of the Québec education system. However, the data contained in this bulletin deal with all adults who are 15 years of age and up, and they largely reflect a historical heritage that goes back to the education reform of the 1960s.

Education Level of the Cultural Communities in General

Table 1 presents the number and relative weight of the communities studied in this document among the adult population of the province of Québec. Among the cultural communities, the size of the Italian community is noteworthy in that it comprised nearly 120 000 adults. This community was the only group with a relative size in excess of one percent of the adult population of Québec, representing in fact 2.1% of that population. The relative weight of the Spanish, Jewish, Arabic, Haitian, Greek, Chinese, and Portuguese communities among the adult population of Québec fell between 0.5% and 0.9%. The relative weight of the Vietnamese, German and Polish communities was less than 0.5%. The Spanish and Haitian communities grew at a remarkable

1. See Foucault, Diane. *The Aboriginal School Population of Québec*, Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, DSEQ. *Education Statistics Bulletin*, No. 7, September 1998.

rate between 1991 and 1996. During this time span, the relative weight of the Spanish community[1] increased from 0.7% to 0.9%, and that of the Haitian community increased from 0.6% to 0.8%. The relative weight of the Jewish community decreased from 1.2% to 0.9%.

Table 1
Population of the principal cultural communities of Québec and the French and English communities (15 years of age and up) in 1996

Community	Population	Proportion of Adult Population of Québec (%)
French	4 583 555	80.8
English	465 020	8.2
Italian	117 950	2.1
Spanish	50 205	0.9
Jewish	49 120	0.9
Arabic	46 250	0.8
Haitian	43 485	0.8
Greek	38 605	0.7
Chinese	33 495	0.6
Portuguese	27 980	0.5
Vietnamese	17 385	0.3
German	17 300	0.3
Polish	16 065	0.3
All of Québec	5 673 465	100.0

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Canada, 1996, unpublished data.

Table 2 presents the proportion of the adult population of the cultural communities and of the French and English communities that has attained the three major levels in the school system, namely, successful completion of grade nine, receipt of a secondary school diploma and a university education.

Table 2
Proportion of the principal cultural communities of Québec and the French and English communities (15 years of age and up) that reached certain levels of the education system in 1991 and 1996 (%)

Community	Grade Nine		Secondary School Diploma		University	
	1991	1996	1991	1996	1991	1996
French	79.7	81.9	60.4	64.2	16.1	18.2
English	88.5	89.6	68.2	71.1	29.3	31.0
Italian	58.6	60.8	47.7	51.4	14.7	16.5
Spanish	83.0	84.2	65.2	67.1	26.8	27.0
Jewish	89.6	89.7	71.9	72.7	40.8	40.5
Arabic	87.9	88.1	76.0	76.6	44.7	46.4
Haitian	79.5	78.7	59.3	60.3	20.5	21.5
Greek	63.1	66.4	48.6	52.5	16.6	20.0
Chinese	74.9	78.8	55.4	61.6	29.0	32.2
Portuguese	55.9	58.3	38.7	42.8	9.5	11.9
Vietnamese	N/A	84.1	N/A	68.3	N/A	39.7
German	90.4	90.0	76.6	79.0	28.2	29.1
Polish	81.9	83.2	69.5	70.9	31.6	31.6
All of Québec	79.9	81.9	60.9	64.5	18.1	20.2

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Canada, 1996, unpublished data.
N/A: Not available.

The 1996 census data show that nearly 82% of adults in Québec reached grade nine. This proportion exceeded 85% in the German, Jewish, English, and Arabic communities. The other communities exhibiting proportions that were higher than the Québec average were the Spanish, Vietnamese, and Polish communities. The same groups also exceeded the Québec average for the next two levels of the education system. Nearly 65% of adults in Québec had a secondary school diploma. This proportion reached 79% for the German community, 77% for the Arabic community, 73% for the Jewish community, 71% for the English and Polish communities, 68% for the Vietnamese community, and 67% for the Spanish community. The proportion of adults that reached the university level exceeded 40% in the Arabic and Jewish communities; it exceeded

1. The Spanish community includes all persons whose mother tongue is Spanish, regardless of their continent of origin.

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30% in the Vietnamese, Polish and English communities and reached 29% and 27% in the German and Spanish communities. These proportions exceeded the provincial average of 20.2% by a wide margin.

The French community was equal to the Québec average as regards the first two levels of education. However, it was two percentage points lower in relation to the entire adult population of Québec as regards the proportion of adults that reached the university level.

The Chinese and Haitian communities were characterized by relatively high proportions of persons with little education, as well as by proportions of very highly educated persons who were higher than the Québec average. Hence, 40% of Haitian adults and 38% of Chinese adults had not obtained a secondary school diploma. However, 21.5% of the Haitian community had attended university. In the Chinese community, 32.2% of adults had attended university, namely, 12 percentage points higher than for Québec as a whole.

The populations with the least education were those of the Greek, Italian and, especially, Portuguese communities. In the Greek and Italian communities, the proportion of persons with a secondary school diploma barely exceeded 50%. In the Portuguese community, over 40% of adults had not reached grade nine, and nearly 60% did not have a secondary school diploma.

Developments in this regard between 1991 and 1996 indicate that, in general, the level of education is increasing in all communities and at all levels of the education system. Differences between the communities have decreased. The average discrepancy (in absolute numbers) with regard to the proportion of adults that reached grade nine, in relation to the proportion province-wide, decreased from 9.1 percentage points in 1991 to 8.3 percentage points in 1996. For holders of a secondary school diploma, the average discrepancy decreased from 9.8 to 8.7 percentage points over the same period. The average discrepancy in the percentage of adults who had a university education was 10.1 percentage points in 1991 and 9.3 percentage points in 1996.

A secondary school diploma is generally considered to be a minimum education requirement. Table 3 indicates that 35.5% of adults in Québec did not meet this requirement in 1996. However, part of this population was still attending school, especially among the younger age group. In the cultural communities, a little fewer than six Portuguese adults out of ten and nearly half of Italian and Greek adults did not have a secondary school diploma. Moreover, the proportion of adults with less than nine years of education was 41.7% in the Portuguese community, 39.2% in the Italian community and 33.6% in the Greek community—proportions that were twice as high as for Québec as a whole (18.1%).

Table 3
Proportion of the population of the principal cultural communities of Québec and the French and English communities (15 years of age and up) without a secondary school diploma, according to level of education attained, in 1996 (%)

Community	Less Than 9 Years of Education	9-13 Years of Education Without a Diploma	Total
French	18.1	17.7	35.8
English	10.4	18.5	28.9
Italian	39.2	9.4	48.6
Spanish	15.8	17.1	32.9
Jewish	10.3	17.0	27.3
Arabic	11.9	11.5	23.4
Haitian	21.3	18.5	39.8
Greek	33.6	13.8	47.4
Chinese	21.2	17.1	38.3
Portuguese	41.7	15.5	57.2
Vietnamese	15.8	15.8	31.6
German	9.9	11.0	20.9
Polish	16.7	12.4	29.1
All of Québec	18.1	17.4	35.5

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Canada, 1996, unpublished data.

Education Level According to Age

The distribution of adults according to level of education and age makes it possible to obtain a historical perspective of the changes that have occurred in education levels. It also shows the groups of young adults exhibiting weaknesses in their basic education that are likely to make entering the job market more difficult.

The data presented in Table 4 showed an improvement in the education level of young people in relation to the older generations. This was particularly evident when the education level of 25–34-year-olds was compared with the education level of those 35 years of age and up; however, a comparison with the level of education of 15–24-year-olds was more difficult to establish, particularly for the two highest levels, since this age group had not completed its schooling.

As far as reaching the ninth grade is concerned, the data presented in Table 4 reveal that all communities recorded progress, but especially the communities in which the education level was lowest, in particular the Italian, Greek and Portuguese communities. Whereas in these communities the proportion of adults aged 35 years and up that reached the ninth grade stood between 41% and 48%, among 25–34-year-olds, the proportion reaching that grade was 98.3% in the Italian community, 97.0% in the Greek community and 79.1% in the Portuguese community. There was also noteworthy progress in the French and Chinese communities.

A major, generalized improvement was also noted in the proportions of adults with a secondary school diploma. The most significant progress was experienced in the least educated communities, namely, the Italian, Greek and Portuguese communities. In the Italian community, the proportion of adults 35 years of age and up with a secondary school diploma was 36.4%, whereas the proportion was 91.0% for the 25–34-year-old age group. In the Greek community, the proportions were 36.3% for those 35 years of age and up and 87.1% for 25–34-year-olds. In the Portuguese community, the proportions were 30.1% and 63.4%. Moreover, the 25–34-year-old age group in the Portuguese community and, to a lesser extent, in the Haitian and Vietnamese community lagged behind. Although the proportion of adults aged 25–34 with a secondary school diploma stood at 80.7% for Québec as a whole, it stood at 73.8% in the Vietnamese community, 72.8% in the Haitian community and 63.4% in the Portuguese community.

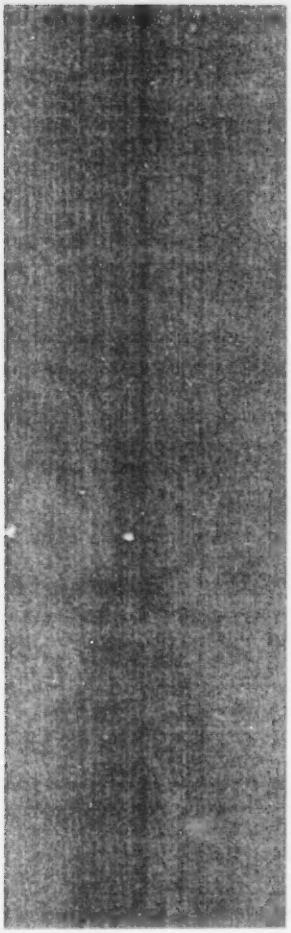
The data on university enrolment indicated a general improvement. Here again, the most significant increases were seen in the Italian, Greek and Portuguese communities. In the Italian and Greek communities, the proportion of adults 35 years of age and up that reached university was 11%; among 25–34-year-olds, the proportion was 34% in the Italian community and 43% in the Greek community. Among the Portuguese community, the proportions were 9% for those 35 years of age and up and 20% for 25–34-year-olds. However, the last proportion was significantly lower than that of 25–34-year-olds in Québec as a whole, which stood at 29%. In addition, significant progress was noted in the Chinese, German, Jewish, and French communities.

It was shown that as the level of education increased from one age group to another, the inequalities between the communities with regard to reaching the first two levels of the education system were reduced. Hence, the absolute mean discrepancy in relation to the provincial average between the communities decreased from 12.0 percentage points for those 35 years of age and up to 4.5 percentage points for 25–34- year-olds, with regard to passing grade nine, and from 12.0 to 7.8 percentage points, with regard to obtaining a secondary school diploma. However, such was not the case for university studies, in that the discrepancy increased from 11.3 to 13.1 percentage points from one age group to the other. This situation can be explained by the fact that, among the communities that exhibited the highest increase were the Jewish, German and Chinese communities, which are among the most highly educated.

Table 4
Proportion of the population of the principal cultural communities of Québec and the French and English communities (15 years of age and up) that reached certain levels of the education system, according to age, in 1996 (%)

Community	Age Group	Grade Nine	Secondary School Diploma	University
French	15-24 years	91.8	95.2	59.2
	25-34 years	94.6	96.1	77.9
	35 years and up	76.4	73.7	61.3
	Total	82.6	81.2	64.1
English	15-24 years	95.6	97.1	64.0
	25-34 years	97.1	97.3	83.8
	35 years and up	85.6	85.3	69.2
	Total	89.8	89.4	71.3
Italian	15-24 years	96.7	98.4	71.4
	25-34 years	97.9	98.4	87.8
	35 years and up	49.4	39.3	40.7
	Total	64.1	57.3	53.2
Spanish	15-24 years	89.0	87.9	52.8
	25-34 years	90.2	90.8	75.9
	35 years and up	83.3	74.9	70.9
	Total	86.7	81.9	68.8
Jewish	15-24 years	95.1	99.3	69.6
	25-34 years	99.0	99.7	90.4
	35 years and up	86.7	86.4	70.6
	Total	89.7	89.7	73.0
Arabic	15-24 years	92.9	92.4	65.9
	25-34 years	95.9	93.8	89.7
	35 years and up	88.9	75.4	81.5
	Total	91.5	83.6	81.5
Haitian	15-24 years	85.6	86.5	51.3
	25-34 years	91.2	87.4	77.0
	35 years and up	80.3	67.4	63.9
	Total	83.9	74.8	64.7
Greek	15-24 years	96.3	98.4	67.0
	25-34 years	97.5	95.9	84.7
	35 years and up	53.1	42.5	40.8
	Total	69.9	62.5	54.6
Chinese	15-24 years	93.8	95.7	68.1
	25-34 years	89.6	87.9	78.9
	35 years and up	75.0	62.7	57.8
	Total	82.1	75.5	64.7
Portuguese	15-24 years	87.5	88.9	52.0
	25-34 years	79.9	78.7	61.7
	35 years and up	44.2	37.7	33.0
	Total	60.5	55.9	43.2
Vietnamese	15-24 years	91.6	93.0	62.1
	25-34 years	86.7	88.2	70.1
	35 years and up	79.4	66.2	41.4
German	15-24 years	96.1	74.0	31.2
	25-34 years	99.0	93.3	47.1
	35 years and up	88.2	77.1	26.5
Polish	15-24 years	96.1	66.2	16.7
	25-34 years	98.6	92.8	42.1
	35 years and up	79.7	68.4	31.9
All of Québec	15-24 years	93.5	63.0	14.3
	25-34 years	95.1	80.7	29.2
	35 years and up	75.0	60.1	19.0

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Canada, 1996, unpublished data.



Education Level According to Gender

First of all, the comparison of the education levels attained by men and women showed the advantage held by men, at all levels of the education system and in all communities (Table 5). There were only three exceptions. In the French community, the proportion of women who obtained a secondary school diploma (64.2%) was equal to that of men (64.1%); in the Jewish community, 89.7% of men and women had passed grade nine; and finally, in the Portuguese community, the proportion of women who enrolled in university (12.4%) exceeded that of men (11.5%) by nearly one percentage point. The discrepancies between the education levels of men and women were particularly high in the Arabic, Vietnamese, Haitian, German, and Chinese communities. However, with the exception of the Haitians, who had less education than all female Quebecers, the women of these communities were among the most highly educated.

The age data indicate that the situation will be reversed in the fairly long term in favour of women. The proportion of women under 35 years of age who had passed grade nine already exceeded that of men in the French, English, Italian, Jewish, Vietnamese, and German communities. The same was true of women in the 15–24-year-old age group in the Haitian, Greek, Chinese, Portuguese, and Polish communities, as well as women from 25 to 34 years old in the Spanish community. The only community in which more men than women aged 15 to 24 and 25 to 34 passed the ninth grade was the Arabic community; however the discrepancy between men and women in this community was much lower among those under 35 years of age than among those 35 years of age and older.

The same trend can be seen concerning men and women with a secondary school diploma. The proportion of women under 35 years of age with a diploma exceeded that of men in the French, English, Italian, Spanish, Jewish, Greek, Portuguese, Vietnamese, and German communities. The same was true of women between 15 and 24 years of age in the Arabic, Haitian and Chinese communities, whereas, in the Polish community, an equal number of men and women had a secondary school diploma.

As far as university studies are concerned, the figures in Table 5 also indicate a potential reversal of the situation, since, with the sole exception of the Arabic community, the proportion of women in the 15–24-year-old age group that reached university exceeded that of men in all communities, whereas, among 25–34-year-olds, the proportion of women exceeded that of men in the French, English, Italian, Spanish, Jewish, Greek, and Portuguese communities. Moreover, in the Arabic community, women from 15 to 24 years of age had practically reached parity with men (29.2% compared with 29.3%).

Table 5
Proportion of the population of the principal cultural communities of Québec and the French and English communities that reached certain levels of the education system, according to age and gender, in 1996 (%)

Community	Age Group	Grade Nine		Secondary School Diploma		University	
		Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
French	15-24 years	91.8	95.2	59.2	66.5	10.1	15.3
	25-34 years	94.6	96.1	77.9	82.6	24.7	28.6
	35 years and up	76.4	73.7	61.3	58.5	19.1	15.5
	Total	82.6	81.2	64.1	64.2	18.6	17.8
English	15-24 years	95.6	97.1	64.0	69.3	21.8	26.2
	25-34 years	97.1	97.3	83.8	86.6	39.9	40.2
	35 years and up	85.6	85.3	69.2	66.8	34.8	25.8
	Total	89.8	89.4	71.3	70.9	33.6	28.6
Italian	15-24 years	96.7	98.4	71.4	81.6	18.2	25.5
	25-34 years	97.9	98.4	87.8	94.2	32.7	34.9
	35 years and up	49.4	39.3	40.7	31.8	13.4	8.4
	Total	64.1	57.3	53.2	49.4	17.6	15.4
Spanish	15-24 years	89.0	87.9	52.8	57.2	11.4	13.9
	25-34 years	90.2	90.8	75.9	77.3	30.8	33.4
	35 years and up	83.3	74.9	70.9	62.2	34.0	25.9
	Total	86.7	81.9	68.8	65.5	28.4	25.7
Jewish	15-24 years	95.1	99.3	69.6	78.1	31.2	34.1
	25-34 years	99.0	99.7	90.4	93.5	60.6	61.8
	35 years and up	86.7	86.4	70.6	68.0	44.0	33.8
	Total	89.7	89.7	73.0	72.4	44.0	37.2
Arabic	15-24 years	92.9	92.4	65.9	67.0	29.3	29.2
	25-34 years	95.9	93.8	89.7	85.6	61.9	53.8
	35 years and up	88.9	75.4	81.5	63.3	54.9	32.4
	Total	91.5	83.6	81.5	70.2	52.9	37.8
Haitian	15-24 years	85.6	86.5	51.3	53.0	7.6	11.9
	25-34 years	91.2	87.4	77.0	69.1	30.0	26.2
	35 years and up	80.3	67.4	63.9	53.5	29.0	17.2
	Total	83.9	74.8	64.7	56.9	25.5	18.4
Greek	15-24 years	96.3	98.4	67.0	75.6	20.5	27.3
	25-34 years	97.5	95.9	84.7	89.4	42.0	44.2
	35 years and up	53.1	42.5	40.8	31.4	13.9	8.9
	Total	69.9	62.5	54.6	50.2	21.1	18.8
Chinese	15-24 years	93.8	95.7	68.1	70.8	27.0	35.3
	25-34 years	89.6	87.9	78.9	75.7	51.5	48.3
	35 years and up	75.0	62.7	57.8	46.8	30.9	19.9
	Total	82.1	75.5	64.7	58.6	34.8	29.8
Portuguese	15-24 years	87.5	88.9	52.0	62.9	8.1	12.8
	25-34 years	79.9	78.7	61.7	65.5	17.9	22.8
	35 years and up	44.2	37.7	33.0	27.2	10.0	8.0
	Total	60.5	55.9	43.2	42.3	11.5	12.4
Vietnamese	15-24 years	91.6	93.0	62.1	70.4	26.9	33.2
	25-34 years	86.7	88.2	70.1	77.0	43.9	40.3
	35 years and up	87.9	71.4	75.9	57.2	52.3	31.6
	Total	88.8	79.5	72.2	64.5	45.2	34.3
German	15-24 years	97.6	100.0	75.9	76.1	26.5	35.2
	25-34 years	97.3	99.1	90.7	93.7	49.5	43.7
	35 years and up	92.2	84.8	84.7	70.5	29.9	23.4
	Total	93.6	87.1	85.6	73.6	32.3	26.4
Polish	15-24 years	95.5	96.0	66.2	66.2	13.6	19.2
	25-34 years	98.4	96.7	92.3	91.3	45.1	38.8
	35 years and up	81.0	77.9	71.2	65.5	35.4	28.4
	Total	84.4	82.2	73.1	68.8	34.3	29.0
All of Québec	15-24 years	92.0	95.0	59.6	66.6	11.9	16.9
	25-34 years	94.6	95.7	78.7	82.7	27.8	30.6
	35 years and up	76.6	73.5	61.9	58.4	21.5	16.8
	Total	82.8	81.1	64.8	64.2	21.0	19.4

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Canada, 1996, unpublished data.

Conclusion

The analysis of 1996 Canadian census data on the education level reached by the adult populations of the principal cultural communities of Québec and the French and English communities underlines numerous elements.

First, the level of education of these communities is characterized by the diversity of the situations encountered. The most highly educated group comprises the German, Jewish, English, Arabic, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Polish populations. The French community falls close to the average for Québec as a whole. The least educated communities are the Greek, Italian and Portuguese communities. The Haitian and Chinese communities are characterized by a relatively high proportion of adults with a low level of education as well as by a large proportion that have reached the university level.

The comparison of the 1996 census data with the 1991 data shows that the education level increased in all communities and at all levels. The analysis of the 1996 data according to age indicates that the progress should continue, in that young adults (under 35 years of age) are much more highly educated than older adults. In addition, discrepancies decreased between the communities with regard to successful completion of the ninth grade and the obtaining of a secondary school diploma. However, the situation is not as clear with regard to university studies. The overall data indicate that the discrepancies decreased between 1991 and 1996. However, the 1996 age data indicate that the discrepancies between communities were greater among 25–34-year-olds and among those 35 years of age or older.

The education level of men was higher than that of women in all the communities. However, the situation should reverse itself in the future in that, in all the younger age groups, women have generally attained the third level of the school system in higher proportions than have men.

However, despite the progress revealed by this portrait, there are still certain gaps in the basic education of certain communities, and there is even some illiteracy. In this respect, 42% of Portuguese adults, 39% of Italian adults and 37% of Greek adults had not passed the ninth grade, and 57% of Portuguese adults, 49% of Italian adults, 47% of Greek adults, and 40% of Haitian adults did not have a secondary school diploma. It should be noted that it was primarily older adults who lagged behind. However, among 25–34-year-olds, 35% of Portuguese adults, 27% of Haitian adults and 26% of Vietnamese adults did not have a secondary school diploma; the proportion was approximately 20% in the Chinese, Spanish and French communities.

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English translation of Bulletin statistique de l'éducation n° 11 *La scolarité de la population adulte des principales communautés culturelles du Québec en 1996*

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